

Crossing Paths



WITH WILDLIFE IN WASHINGTON TOWNS AND CITIES

SPRING 2001

International bird hostel?

You may not think of your yard as an international bird hostel, but it may serve as just that this spring and summer.

Many neotropical migratory birds that winter in tropical countries of Central and South America spend their summers breeding in Washington or further north. These include colorful species not commonly seen like flycatchers, warblers, vireos, and tanagers, but also more "common" species like killdeer, rufous hummingbird, yellow-headed blackbird, burrowing owl, and loggerhead shrike. Some of these international visitors migrate thousands of miles each year.

Even if they only stay a day or two, your provisions of water and natural food help them regain strength to continue their journey to nesting habitat. These stopovers are especially productive if your yard includes lots of native plants and flowers with nectar sources for insects, which make up the bulk of these migrants' high-protein spring and summer diets.

Because these birds depend on habitat in both hemispheres, it's important to "think globally and act locally."

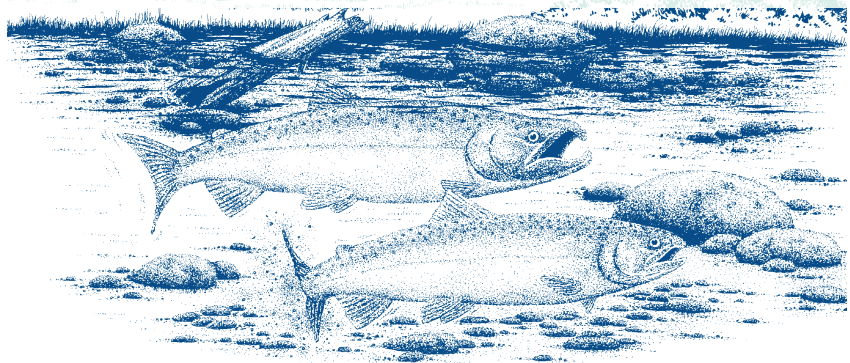
That's what **International Migratory Bird Day (IMBD)**, May 12, 2001, is all about - raising awareness every year during the peak of neotropical migrations (second Saturday of May) about the special needs of these species. This annual event was created by "Partners in Flight" a coalition of federal and state agencies, bird clubs, non-governmental organizations, corporations, and individuals whose mission is to conserve migratory birds.

Several events to celebrate International Migratory Bird Day are scheduled across the

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From the Director:

You can help fish during water, energy shortage in your backyard



by Jeff Koenings, WDFW Director

Low snow-pack in the mountains and low precipitation in general this past winter has resulted in water and energy shortages and problems for fish in the northwest.

Inadequate flows in rivers and streams means anadromous fish like salmon and steelhead cannot reach spawning waters or migrate to the ocean.

Inadequate water levels in reservoirs, lakes, and ponds means resident fish like trout and kokanee will not grow or survive as well as they should.

The situation is exacerbated by our own human lifestyle demands for electricity, generated largely by water in the northwest.

Although the overall situation must be addressed by many levels of government, hydropower industry, and business, there **IS** something that Backyard Wildlife Sanctuary (BWS) managers like you can do to help.

Try "xeriscaping" your property. That's pronounced "zeer-i-scaping" and it's from

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Crossing Paths is a twice-yearly newsletter for Washington residents enrolled in the Backyard Wildlife Sanctuary Program.

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Washington
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**FISH and
WILDLIFE**

Living With Washington's Wildlife: Rabbits

(Editor's note: WDFW's Seattle-area urban wildlife biologist Russell Link is compiling a series of "Living With Washington's Wildlife" factsheets for distribution at regional offices that will eventually be part of a new book, "Living With Wildlife in the Pacific Northwest." This newsletter will regularly feature excerpts since many BWS managers have asked for help when some wildlife becomes too much of a good thing!)

Three species of rabbits are commonly seen in Washington, one native and two introduced species. The native Nuttall cottontail rabbit (*Sylvilagus nuttallii*) is found throughout the eastern half of the state. The introduced eastern cottontail (*Sylvilagus floridanus*) now lives throughout Washington, particularly in and around urban areas. The domestic rabbit, usually European rabbit (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*), is most often seen in the San Juan Islands, although its distribution is spreading.

Famous for their reproductive abilities, rabbits have a month-long gestation period, and three or four litters of four to eight young are born each year. Rabbits may live two or more years in the wild, but where predators are numerous they seldom live more than a year.

Rabbits tend to concentrate in brushy fence rows or field edges, gullies with cover, brush piles, or landscaped areas where food and shelter are suitable. Rabbits may spend their entire lives in an area two acres or less, but will travel a half mile or more when cover is disturbed or food supplies are low.

Cottontails do not dig their own burrows. They use natural cavities or burrows excavated by other animals. Underground dens are used primarily in extremely cold or wet weather and to escape predators. Brush piles, blackberry



thickets, and other areas of cover are often adequate alternatives to burrows. Rabbits make a nest-like depression just below the surface of the ground in dense cover. They use this fur-lined depression to hide, raise young, and stay warm.

Rabbits spend most daylight hours lying in their nest, or dusting a few feet away from hiding areas. Few animals are as content to sit still for as long as rabbits, a trait they've likely developed to avoid being seen by predators.

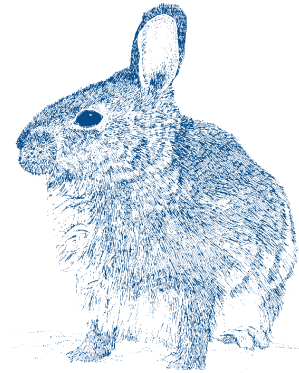
Situations and Signs

A rabbit's appetite can get it in trouble with gardeners, landscapers, orchardists, and foresters during all seasons of the year. Rabbits feed on flowers and leafy plants during the growing season and the buds, stems, and bark of woody plants in the winter. In areas with snow cover for long periods, young plants may be clipped off at snow height, and trees and shrubs completely girdled. Evidence of rabbits can be identified by the appearance of gnawing on woody growth and the clean-cut, angled clipping of young stems. Distinctive, small round fecal droppings in the area are also a sign of their presence.

Exclusion Techniques

Chicken wire supported by sturdy stakes or posts every 6 to 8 feet is strong enough to exclude rabbits. Such fences need to be only 18-inches high, but require the bottom to be tight to the ground or buried a few inches. Be sure the mesh is 1 inch or smaller so that young rabbits will not be able to go through it. The lower 12 to 2 feet of an existing fence can also be covered with small wire mesh to exclude rabbits.

Some gardeners prefer to construct movable fence panels that can be stored as sections (2 x 8 feet is a handy size) and set out to protect the garden right after first planting, when damage is likely to be most severe. When rabbit presence is only sporadic or occasional, new plantings can be protected by using commercially sold "cloches" or 1-gallon plastic milk containers that have the



bottom cut out and are placed over the seedling to provide protection both from rabbits and late frost.

Cylinders of 1/4 inch wire hardware cloth or 3/4-inch chicken wire will protect valuable young orchard trees or landscape plants. (1/4-inch hardware cloth also protects against mouse damage.) The cylinders should extend higher than a rabbit's reach while standing on the expected snow depth, and stand 1 to 2 inches out from the tree trunk. Commercial tree guards or tree wrap are other alternatives.

Repellents and other methods

Many homemade repellent strategies have been tried, with the usual varying results. Under some circumstances scare tape or balloons may frighten rabbits away from an area. The pinwheels sold to repel moles might provide a visual

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Your experience wanted . . . in writing

If you've had experience "living with wildlife" around your home, write your story in less than 700 words and send it to Russell Link, c/o WDFW, 16018 Mill Creek Blvd., Mill Creek, WA 98012 (**preferably email to linkrel@dfw.wa.gov**) for possible inclusion in our book in progress "Living With Wildlife in the Pacific Northwest." If your story is selected, you'll receive a complimentary copy of the book.

Window treatments minimize bird collisions

The age-old problem of birds flying into windows recently solicited some "chat" among Wildlife Society members over the Internet.

Here are the tried and true, and sometimes new, solutions they came up with that you might try :

- * Move bird feeders and baths further away from windows (and keep those binoculars near the window inside to watch birds from afar)
- * Leave windows dusty or leave screens on year-round to cut down on reflections (truly after the heart of anyone who hates spring cleaning, or doesn't "do" windows!)
- * Landscape with plants in locations and heights that discourage birds from flying near windows
- * Place dark-colored netting over exterior of windows
- * Hang mylar strips or fluorescent orange flagging or surveyor's tape so they flutter over window exterior
- * Keep shades drawn (and resign yourself to watching birds from other spots in your home)
- * Remove reflective plastic coating on windows
- * Put lots of different shape silhouette stickers on the outside of the window to break up the reflection; a hawk silhouette alone is not always effective, and inside stickers may not work at all

Deer Park Bird Fair June 2-3

You can pick up gardening tips from Spokane County Extension and Master Gardeners, tour a "naturalized landscape," and buy plants and bird supplies at the second annual Backyard Bird & Plant Fair Sat., June 2 and Sun., June 3, at Firwood Nursery, 8403 W. Burroughs Rd., just south of Deer Park. The event runs 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. each day and of course features WDFW's Backyard Wildlife Sanctuary program.

Juncos are number one!

The Dark-eyed Junco is Washington's number one bird!

WDFW urban wildlife biologist Patricia Thompson reports that the junco shows up at the top of WDFW's Winter Backyard Bird Survey's *Most Widespread Bird List* and the *Top Ten Birds List* every year for the past seven years of the survey.

This dependable little winter feeding station visitor weighs in at about 3/4 of an ounce, and has been clocked at flying 26 mph.

The Dark-eyed Junco comes in many disguises, all of which are the same species, *Junco hyemalis*. The "Oregon" and "Pink-sided" are the ones most frequently found in Washington. The "Slate-colored" form is less common and mostly seen east of the Cascades. One distinctive feature that says "junco" among all variations is the vertical, white outer tail feathers, always seen with the flick of the tail on a departing bird.

Dark-eyed Juncos used to be classified in the finch family *Fringillidae* and are still called a finch in some references. They have now been placed in the very closely related family *Emberizidae* which

are the wood warblers, tanagers, cardinals, grosbeaks, buntings, blackbirds and sparrows. If you look in your field guide, juncos are likely placed among the sparrows, to which they are most closely related.

Even though migratory to Mexico, Dark-eyed Juncos are here year round, wintering and nesting in our state. They nest and forage primarily on the ground. These birds eat predominately seeds, but feed their nestlings exclusively insects for high protein. At feeders, Dark-eyed Juncos prefer black oil and hulled sunflower seed, peanut kernels, millet, thistle seed and occasionally suet mixes. Favorite nesting habitats are forests or forest edges, including backyards and urban parks. Nests are usually in a shallow depression made by the bird in soft ground, hidden by overhead vegetation, and often on the side of a bank. Nests are made of grass and twigs and other small vegetation, finished with fine, soft materials. Juncos very rarely nest in a shrub or tree but will build nests in the bowl of a fern. In the milder sections of the state, they can begin nesting in mid-March.

Helping Fish during water, energy shortage (continued from page 1)

the Greek word "xeros" which means "dry." It's a way to lessen the effects of water shortages by using drought-tolerant plants in a design and maintenance plan that uses less water. And that ultimately means more water for fish and energy production

Your original BWS packet's list of plants includes many of these drought-tolerant species that are used by wildlife, like ocean spray (*Holodiscus discolor*), wild rose (*Rosa* spp.), chokecherry (*Prunus virginiana*), mountain ash (*Sorbus* spp.), western sandcherry (*Prunus bessyi*), Basin big sage (*Artemisia tridentate*), red-flowered currant (*Ribes sanguineum*), and Oregon grape (*Mahonia* spp).

Planning and designing where to group these plants in your yard is important. You'll need to look at drainage, sun exposure, soil type, and slope. You can save water, too, by improving your soil with compost, mulching plant beds, and irrigating efficiently.

You can learn details of xeriscaping in many good books and Internet websites on the subject. You'll find that this kind of gardening can save you maintenance time and costs, but still look beautiful and attract wildlife.

I encourage you to consider devoting a large portion of your sanctuary to a xeriscape.

You may never have thought that your efforts to help and enjoy songbirds in your backyard could ultimately help fish, but remember the old adage: "Everything is connected to everything else."

Thanks for whatever you can do to help both fish and wildlife in Washington!



A Great blue heron rookery, or communal nesting site, would be a bonanza for any backyard wildlife sanctuary since these four-foot-tall, prehistoric-looking birds don't nest just anywhere.

They set up spring housekeeping together in large groups in the same place year after year, which is why it's so important to preserve the habitat that commands their loyalty; big, tall trees that

can support their huge, annually-re-used nests, along a waterway where they can fish.

So when WDFW's urban biologist Michelle Tirhi got a call last November about heron nests destroyed when a stand of alders in a riparian area near Tacoma were felled, she jumped into action to make sure the birds would have something to return to this spring.

The concerned caller, Harlan McChord, agreed to have salvaged heron nests relocated in trees on his property, adjacent to the scene of destruction.

About 20 people, from five government agencies and non-profit groups, plus one family with their home-schooled children, assisted Michelle in extracting 30 nests from the trees that had been cut down. Some nests were picked up intact off the ground, she reports, while others had to be cut out from under debris. The group constructed plastic mesh baskets, to hold the nests and to haul them up the new trees.

Two tree experts, Tim Brown and Randy McDougal, donated several days of climbing and positioning the nests in the

trees, and trimming branches around the relocated nests to open up the canopy so herons could use them again. In February, Michelle, Harlan, and Tim hauled four life-sized heron decoys into the trees surrounding the relocated nests. In March, two more decoys were placed directly on nests.

Michelle has been playing a tape-recording of a heron distress call in breeding season at the site every other day to attract herons.

"Within the first ten minutes of playing that tape," Michelle recalls, "I had 17 herons fly into and attempt to perch on the trees holding the decoys!"

By early March, about 50 herons were moving between the old site and new location. At that time, none had laid eggs at the new site, however.

"Great blue herons are so loyal to these communal nesting sites," Michelle says, "that I'm not sure how successful we'll be in this effort. There's an active red-tailed hawk nest close by, and I'm not sure what impact that will have. But I think there's a 50-50 chance that these herons will adapt to this change."

Heron rookery rescued!

Home remedy repels pesky deer

The following home-made deer repellent recipe seems to work well for some tree nursery managers who are perpetually fending off hungry deer.

Into a one-gallon tank sprayer mix:

2 beaten and strained eggs (strain them or that funny piece of egg white will plug up your sprayer)

1 cup of milk, yogurt, buttermilk, sour milk, or the like

1 tsp of liquid dish soap

1 tsp of liquid cooking oil

20 drops of essential oil of clove, cinnamon or eucalyptus ("essential" is most concentrated, available from health food stores in 2-month supply size vials)

Top the tank off with water and pump it up. Mist lightly on dry foliage, with no rain coming for a couple hours.

This will last for 2 to 6 weeks, depending on the weather. Like all home remedies, one may work on some deer but none seem to work on all of them.

International Bird Hostel?

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state on May 12. In Kirkland, an environmental fair focusing on migratory birds, particularly ospreys, will be held at Juanita Bay Park from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. In Seattle, bird talks and special activities will be available at the Seattle Aquarium from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. In Tukwila, a day-long Backyard Wildlife Fair will showcase the community's efforts toward certification by the National Wildlife Federation as a Community Wildlife Habitat. In Spokane, WDFW urban wildlife biologist Howard Ferguson is teaming up with a local "bird-friendly" (shade-grown) coffee roaster to lead an 8 a.m. bird-watching, coffee-drinking stroll along the Spokane River. To find IMBD events in your area, visit <http://birds.fws.gov/imbd.html>.

Living with Rabbits

(continued from page 2)

deterrent to rabbits. Small plots and individual plants can sometimes be protected with commercially available chemical repellents. Care should be taken not to use a repellent on plants that will be eaten (unless it specifies on the label that this can be done).

Encouraging the rabbit's natural predators—or at least not interfering with them—may aid in reducing rabbit damage. Eagles, hawks, owls, foxes, coyotes, bobcats, weasels, and snakes all help control rabbits.

Live trapping

Live trapping isn't usually recommended, for several reasons: Live trapping may not stop the problem because other rabbits will quickly move into a vacancy. A trapped and released rabbit will be stressed and unlikely to survive in an unfamiliar new location and territorial disputes may occur with resident rabbits. Relocation can spread diseases and create damage problems elsewhere.

If you think you need to live trap a rabbit, consult your local law enforcement office to determine whether trapping is allowed under law in your area.

Also, don't trap between October and March, because relocated animals may die from exposure or lack of food. Check the trap morning and evening because rabbits are susceptible to heat and hypothermia and can die in the trap; cover the trap with a piece of plastic and a board.

Live traps can be rented or purchased, set in the area of activity and baited with whatever is being eaten in the area.

Your local WDFW office has a list of Nuisance Wildlife Control Operators who can be hired to help deal with rabbits.

More fun than paying taxes

Here's a way to remember when to get those winter backyard bird feeding survey forms back to us: the deadline is the same as when your taxes are due - April 15! Sorry we can't make paying taxes as fun as surveying winter birds!

Take your cat problem to community

So you've got your own cats living indoors to give those backyard birds some peace, but your neighbors won't listen and their cats still roam free?

Consider taking your cat problem up with your local community.

The American Bird Conservancy (ABC) and its four-year-old "Cats Indoors!" Campaign encourages you to approach your city council, county commission, or other local governing body about strengthening cat control ordinances, including bans on feeding feral cats.

Contact your local animal control authority about offering more free or low cost spay/neuter clinics to encourage cat owners to at least control their numbers.

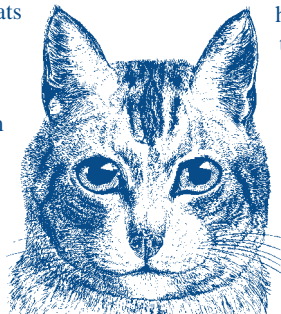
Or gather several fellow BWS managers and start your own publicity campaign by acquiring supplies of *Keeping Cats Indoors Isn't Just For The Birds* posters and brochures from ABC and distributing them at local businesses.

If you're not a cat owner or are one of the rare BWS managers who doesn't have a problem with cats, consider these numbers:

- * Wildlife rehabilitators across Washington report that at least **17 percent of all injuries** they deal with are caused by cats

- * Studies show that every free-ranging cat kills at least **one wild animal a month**

- * At least **30 percent of urban** households and **60 percent of rural** ones



have cats, with a total of more than **60 million** cats in the U.S.; some Seattle neighborhoods average at least **30 cats per block**

- * About **35,000** domestic cats are born every day in the U.S. - more than **three times the human birthrate**

- * Only **35 percent** of cat owners keep cats indoors all the time, even though the Humane Society reports that indoor cats live **three times as long** as free-roaming cats

- * About **64 percent** of cat owners still mistakenly believe that putting bells on cats keeps them from killing birds or other wildlife

If you want help developing a local community campaign to save both backyard wildlife and cats, please contact

Linda Winter, Director of *Cats Indoors! Campaign*, American Bird Conservancy, 1250 24th Street, NW, Suite 400, Washington, DC 20037, phone (202) 452-1535, fax (202) 452-1534, lwinter@abcbirds.org, or visit <http://www.abcbirds.org/catscatsindoors.htm>.



Forest owners get DNR advice

If your property includes forested land, you might want to look into the Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR) "Backyard Forest Stewardship Program." This informational program for owners of very small forested parcels provides advice, recognition, and even some financial assistance to care for your land, including fish and wildlife habitat enhancement.

See <http://www.wa.gov/dnr/htdocs/rp/steward.htm> or call 1-888-STEWKIT to have a free Backyard Forest Stewardship Kit sent to you.



by Flora Johnson
Skelly (condensed from
original "Northwest Garden
News" article)

As gardeners, we think of flowers as objects that are pretty to look at and sometimes lovely to smell. But for Mother Nature, flowers serve a more serious purpose. Their role is to promote the exchange of genetic material (pollen) between plants. Each flower contains a gift of sugar water (nectar) that is eaten by flying creatures such as hummingbirds, butterflies, bees, moths, and even bats. As these creatures visit successive flowers, they pick up pollen from one plant and transfer it to another. That's why they are referred to as "pollinators."

Because of the connection between flowers and pollinators, we can have beautiful flower gardens that also attract a wide variety of creatures that are beautiful and fun to watch. What's more, a flower garden of this type is not likely to produce allergic reactions. When pollen is so heavy that it has to be carried from plant to plant, it's not likely to end up blowing on the breeze - and into your nose.

In creating a nectar garden remember that different pollinators need different plants.

Butterflies, for example, prefer flowers that offer them a sturdy "landing platform" on which they can perch without injuring their wings. This explains their preference for flat, daisy-like blooms like those of purple coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea*) and other flowers that provide broad, sturdy landing surfaces, such as *Sedum spectabilis* "Autumn Joy." Many authorities also believe that butterflies, which have scent receptors on their feet, are attracted to fragrant blooms.

Being cold-blooded, butterflies require heat from the sun in order to warm their muscles enough so that they can fly. They also have difficulty flying in windy spots. Hence, your butterfly-attracting plants should be planted in your garden's sunniest, most wind-sheltered spot.

Unlike butterflies, hummingbirds do not

need to land in order to take nectar from flowers. As a result, their favorite plants often sport hanging, tube-shaped blooms. Our native columbine, *Aquilegia formosa*, is one such hummingbird favorite. *Crocosmia* "Lucifer" is another.

Typical of birds, hummingbirds do not have a well-developed sense of smell, so hummingbird plants need not be fragrant. Some authorities believe that they are attracted to the color red. (Some recent research suggests this is not true, however, and that hummingbirds are likely to check out any brightly colored bloom.)

Gentle, comical bumblebees are perhaps the most faithful visitors to a well-designed nectar garden. On any given day, from early in the morning until late in the afternoon, any garden with flowers is likely to be visited by many of these fat bees with their black and amber "fur coats." Fortunately, because most bumblebees are not very aggressive, the chances of being stung are slight.

"Bumbles" are willing to visit almost any bloom that offers the possibility of nectar. Although they are insects, bumblebees are able to warm their muscles by shivering; as a result they can fly when many other insects cannot. This makes them especially valuable as pollinators.

Because of their size and relative cleverness, bumblebees are able to get nectar from some flowers that frustrate all other pollinators. The striking blue flowers of monkshood (*Aconitum* spp.), for example, are so deep and complicated in structure that, according to at least one authority, only mature bumblebees are able to figure them out.

Other things to consider in designing a nectar garden:

* Avoid using hybrid species of plants, especially recent introductions. Unfortunately, plant breeders usually focus on characteristics that they think will be attractive to humans, not pollinators. As a result, a newly developed hybrid may lack qualities a pollinator needs, such as an adequate supply of nectar. Some fancy flowers, such as

"double" blooms, may be so complicated that pollinators cannot get into them in order to get nectar. When designing your garden, plan on using species varieties, wildflowers, and "old-fashioned" varieties.

* Try to have something blooming throughout the growing season. Hummingbirds eat insects and can use feeders if there is nothing in bloom, but butterflies must be able to find flowers. Because different butterflies appear at different times of year, it's particularly important to have butterfly plants that bloom at different times, from early spring (forget-me-nots) to late fall (asters).

* Keep your nectar garden PESTICIDE FREE and friendly to insects. Many of our most common pollinators - butterflies, bees, moths - are insects. Other pollinators, such as hummingbirds, rely heavily on insects as sources of food. Either way, gardeners who enjoy pollinators learn to appreciate insect guests.

* Provide more than nectar. Although pollinators may visit your flower garden in search of food, they also need places to raise their young and find shelter. Parts of the garden that many of us regard as "messy" are often the very places where our small visitors are trying to bring up babies or keep themselves safe from predators and cold. These include rock and brush piles, dead or dying trees, soft earth, muddy spots, natural areas of all types, and, yes, even "weedy" spots. You'll do yourself and your little friends a big favor if you learn to enjoy a certain amount of garden "mess"!

Flora Johnson Skelly is a garden designer specializing in wildlife habitat and native plant gardens. If you would like to be on her mailing list, contact her at 425-868-8324 or wildflora@wildwords.com or wildflora@wildwords.com. For more information on wildlife-friendly gardening visit her website at <http://www.wildwords.com>.



Whatever happened to CARA?

A year ago you read here that the Conservation and Reinvestment Act (CARA), which would provide fish and wildlife conservation efforts the largest infusion of federal funds in history using revenue from current offshore oil leases, had passed out of committee and to the floor of the House.

The bad news since is that CARA did not pass out of Congress. The good news is that some elements of the bill were passed in two appropriations bills.

One was an Interior Appropriation that has some CARA-like provisions, including \$50 million for wildlife projects that states, including Washington, can compete for during fiscal year 2001 (starting July 1.) The other is the Commerce, Justice and Safety (CJS)

Appropriation that provides a one-time only allocation of \$996,614 to Washington state for wildlife conservation and restoration.

Compared to the \$35 million annually that Washington might potentially have received under the original bill, the new funding is definitely "CARA-lite." But it's still a boost that WDFW wildlife program managers are moving quickly to secure for eco-regional comprehensive planning, recovering wildlife-at-risk, watchable wildlife recreation and education, habitat protection, and other needs.

Meanwhile the coalition of state agencies and organizations that brought CARA this far are re-grouping to press for more long-term funding for wildlife.

BWS benefits beyond wildlife

You probably started your Backyard Wildlife Sanctuary (BWS) hoping to help the bees, birds, and other wildlife in your area. But if you haven't taken stock lately, consider the other benefits your sanctuary brings you...

Aesthetics is probably the greatest bonus. Wildlife adds color, movement, and variation in your landscape, unlike anything you could plant or buy. You can escape the pressures of daily living by feasting your eyes on swallowtails fluttering around monarda or a frog hopping into a pond.

Economics is another benefit. Studies show that landscaping efforts, including backyard wildlife sanctuary designs, increase property values as much as 10 percent. The uniqueness of your sanctuary may even draw potential buyers when you want to sell.

Education is a natural in your sanctuary. Not only do the kids and grandkids learn about the basics of the natural world and wildlife in your outdoor laboratory, but you learn more every day about animal behavior, seasonal changes, and other subtleties.

Pest control also comes naturally. Birds and bats are attracted by the "good" insects that are drawn to your native, flowering plants, but they also eat up more than their weight each day in mosquitoes, flies, gnats, and other pesky bugs.

Owls in earthquake-damaged Capitol!



When the Feb. 28 earthquake cracked the dome of the Capitol in Olympia and the building was off-limits to people, three barn owls took up residence!

Seems that damage inspectors left a window open high on the dome and the birds flew in.

One molting juvenile was captured in a mist net and released outside by urban biologist Michelle Tirhi and other WDFW staff. Windows throughout the building were left open to encourage departure of the other two, possibly an adult nesting pair.

Although barn owls are not uncommon, their namesake nesting habitat - barns — are less common in Washington today than in the past. Could they be adapting to urban sprawl by using abandoned buildings, such as our state Capitol?

Record Robins Eat Surplus Red Delicious

A record high number of robins were observed during the last annual Christmas bird count of the Yakima Valley chapter of the Audubon Society, likely due to two factors.

First, the Yakima area enjoyed an unusually mild winter, perhaps enticing more robins to stay around rather than migrating further south.

But the other reason may be the clincher. A market surplus of Red delicious apples were left unpicked on commercial orchard trees and the robins were gorging themselves on the fruit! A steady food source is more often what draws or keeps animals in any given area, and the all-you-can-eat buffet of unwanted apples was probably a better bet for the robins than moving south.

Rather be on the Internet?

If you'd prefer to help WDFW save printing and postage costs of this newsletter by picking it up off the Internet website (www.wa.gov/wdfw/) please let us know by dropping us a line to remove your name from our mailing list. You'll find "Crossing Paths" under the "Wildlife Viewing" section of the website.



You can pick up an application form at any state licensing or WDFW office, or by contacting the Department of Licensing at P.O. Box 9042, Olympia, WA 98507, 360-902-3770 (telephone menu option #5)

Personalized Plates Help Wildlife

Tell Your Friends:



Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife Backyard Wildlife Sanctuary Program

Westside: 16018 Mill Creek Blvd.,
Mill Creek, Wa. 98012 / 425-775-1311
Eastside: N. 8702 Division St.,
Spokane, Wa. 99218 / 509-456-4082

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This publication is available in alternative formats upon request. Please call the Olympia office of the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife at (360) 902-2207, or TDD (360)902-2207 for more information.

Moving? Re-register BWS

If you've moved from the property you enrolled as a Backyard Wildlife Sanctuary, you need to register your new property in the program, rather than requesting a change of address to receive this newsletter.

We want to keep our records straight on what properties are actually in the program, so you'll need to fill out a BWS enrollment application form (available by calling, writing or e-mailing WDFW's Mill Creek or Spokane offices), and submit it with the \$5 fee to cover the cost of your new sign, certificate, and ongoing subscription to this twice-yearly newsletter.

If you've moved to a property that is currently registered as a Backyard Wildlife Sanctuary, and you want to continue with the program, please re-register the same way.

Speaking of moving, some BWS managers wonder if there's any way to preserve the habitat they've worked to develop once they sell their property. Any realtors or lawyers out there who have thoughts on how that can be conditioned in a real estate transaction?

